

times and the result was a loosely worded rulebook for segregating and limiting blacks in all aspects of political, legal, and social life.

One of the first actions of Congress to provide for the needs of newly freed slaves was to establish the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865, for the period of one year to ease the transition from slavery to citizenship. The Freedmen's Bureau followed on the heels of other efforts by the U.S. government to see to the needs of slaves during the war beginning in 1863. In a new move, the Freedmen's Bureau was created as part of the War Department, and its job was to manage abandoned lands and all issues related to refugees and freedmen using supplies issued by the War Department. Seen as vital to the continued transition, the Bureau's work was extended by Congress. The Freedmen's Bureau established itself in July 1865 in North Carolina where its work lasted until the end of 1868. The bureau assisted with immediate needs of food and housing and also provided health care and educational benefits for future betterment. An advocate for African Americans, the bureau also helped with negotiating labor contracts between blacks and whites, provided loans for land purchases, formed military courts to hear complaints, established banks for blacks to learn fiscal responsibility, and trained blacks to work among themselves as teachers, nurses, and other professionals. Much of the Freedmen's Bureau work was done by concerned northerners, both male and female, who traveled to southern states to work for little pay in sometimes hostile environments, and by occupying soldiers who distributed food and clothing.⁶⁶

Powell, *North Carolina Through Four Centuries*, 383; Alexander, *North Carolina Faces the Freedmen*, 49-52; Hamilton, *Reconstruction*, 174-76.

⁶⁶ The Freedmen's Savings Bank was developed with a branch in Wilmington. Due to mismanagement,

Assisting the bureau were many benevolent organizations such as the American Missionary Association, which helped primarily with educational advancement. Contemporary whites saw the Freedmen's Bureau schools as a center of political organization since the Union League held meetings in the schoolhouses and membership in the League was encouraged by bureau agents. As a result, many schools were burned for their participation in political activity. An early historian of Reconstruction explained that, overall, the Bureau created problems for the freed slaves because through such activities, proactive agents generated a great deal of friction between the races by provoking white hostilities.⁶⁷

During Jonathan Worth's terms as governor (1865-1868), Holden was working himself into a position to run for the governor's office by helping fuel the growth of the fledgling statewide Republican Party, which emerged as a strong force as Congress took over Reconstruction. During his tenure, Worth took steps to return North

political shortcomings and other problems, the Freedman's Bank failed statewide and returned only a portion of its deposits to members. Hamilton felt that, as a result of the losses sustained by African Americans who invested in the bank, they were less eager to make use of other banks in the future. Alexander, *North Carolina Faces the Freedmen*, 99-100; Hamilton, *Reconstruction*, 299, 304-308, 313-314.

⁶⁷ J.G. Hamilton's history of Reconstruction in North Carolina is reflective of the stance adopted by white historians after the entrenchment of the white supremacy campaign in the early twentieth century. A valuable resource for the history of Reconstruction in the state, Hamilton's history is, nonetheless, clouded with a biased view of what he considered the wrongs of Reconstruction. Alexander, *North Carolina Faces the Freedmen*, 99-103, 159; Zuber, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, 6; Maxine Jones, *"A Glorious Work:" The American Missionary Association and Black North Carolinians, 1863-1880* (PhD dissertation, Florida State University, 1982), 123; Hamilton, *Reconstruction*, 295-6, 318-325.